

**ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE**

A method and apparatus for identifying internal occupants of a communications system apparatus with an Ethernet backplane and at least one internal occupant. The method comprising: verifying that a system switch processor ("SSP") has been assigned an IP address; requesting a discovery protocol data package from the SSP; determining whether the discovery protocol data package corresponds to at least one internal occupant; and if the discovery protocol data package corresponds to the at least one internal occupant, then discovering occupant information corresponding to the at least one internal occupant. The apparatus comprising the means for verifying that a system switch processor ("SSP") has been assigned an IP address; the means for requesting a discovery protocol data package from the SSP; the means for determining whether the discovery protocol data package corresponds to at least one internal occupant; and if the discovery protocol data package corresponds to the at least one internal occupant, then the means for discovering occupant information corresponding to the at least one internal occupant.